

## **Testimony in Support of House Bill 772**

*Education – Career Counseling Program for Middle and High School Students – Alterations*

### **Submitted by:**

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### **Committee Members,**

I am honored to submit this testimony in strong support of **House Bill 772**, an essential piece of legislation that reinforces the current policy for all middle and high school students across Maryland to receive vital career counseling services. As someone who has been supporting the delivery of these services over the last year, I have seen the transformation of student lives and deep impact of this work. I believe this bill is a crucial step toward providing students with the tools and resources they need to make informed career decisions early in their academic journey.

As we move toward a future where the job market is constantly evolving, it is more important than ever for students to have access to individualized, tailored career counseling services. By involving workforce development boards and community colleges in the service delivery process, we break down silos and work collaboratively to provide a full range of services. When we are able to equip students with more holistic guidance and career exploration, we ensure they are better prepared to enter the workforce with clarity and confidence.

In Howard County, the school system, workforce development board and community college collaborate seamlessly to provide unique experiences that were not previously offered by the school system to ensure resources are not only available but are tailored to the current job market trends. This year, Howard County's Office of Workforce Development spearheaded a job shadow program to connect students with local businesses and high demand occupations based on their specific career interests. Students are working with staff in a variety of health care, IT, communications, engineering, finance, business, etc. professions to learn about a wide range of roles, hone their post-secondary plans, and connect to work experiences like internships and apprenticeships. Just this week, students shadowed various staff at M&T Bank Stadium and learned about sports management and marketing from the Sports Information Director and Manager of Fitness and Recreation at Howard Community College.

The collaborative career counseling approach is also necessary to support Maryland's goal for apprenticeship and industry-recognized credentials. In Howard County, a Youth Apprenticeship Summit was held in partnership with the local workforce development board, community college and school system in November 2025. Close to 300 students participated and over 200 applied to the program. The partners are convening again to support a youth apprenticeship hiring event this spring and leveraging the energy of bringing youth and local businesses together to connect new businesses to apprenticeship. A system-wide approach is allowing Howard County to engage in more expansive and impactful outreach to the local businesses community by focusing on an apprenticeship spectrum from youth to adults. This practice increases apprenticeship opportunities for both youth and adult job seekers while building a talent pipeline for local businesses.

**Conclusion:**

The Howard County Office of Workforce Development strongly supports **House Bill 772** and the opportunity it presents to strengthen career counseling services for middle and high school students across Maryland. By ensuring that local workforce development boards, school systems, and community colleges have the resources they need to provide high-quality, personalized career counseling, we are investing in the future of our students and the long-term success of Maryland's economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Sincerely,**

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